

## SOLVING THE TOP 10 CHALLENGES IN ADMISSIONS

Optimizing your admissions process, from recruitment to enrollment





Kira Talent's team crafted this guide to support schools as they transform the admissions process.

Our mission is to help the next generation successfully launch their careers.

Kira works with more than 300 programs worldwide to build applicant-first assessments that identify and select their best-fit students.





SOLVING THE TOP 10 CHALLENGES IN ADMISSIONS OPTIMIZING YOUR ADMISSIONS PROCESS, FROM RECRUITMENT TO ENROLLMENT



# Millions of admissions applications are processed each year around the world.

As students apply to anywhere between one or two top choices to twenty different schools, the task of admissions teams becomes more and more complex.

Your school's admissions assessment needs to effectively identify the strongest students from the pool, in a timely manner and in a way that will yield a solid class size. And, most importantly, it needs to give every applicant a fair chance to be considered for the program.

Today, admissions teams are tasked to do it all, often in less time and with fewer resources than they've had in the past.

In this report, we'll highlight the **top ten challenges in admissions assessment**.

You'll learn how Kira Talent's holistic admissions solution is designed to tackle the biggest challenges in assessing prospective students and is creating engaging applicant experiences to deliver the best results for programs around the world.

#### 10 ASSESSMENT CHALLENGES

# Which challenges do you face today?

Learn how Kira Talent's holistic admissions solution helps schools overcome ten major challenges in admissions assessment.



CHALLENGE #1

#### Time

How to assess applicants more efficiently

Click to learn more



CHALLENGE #2

#### **Engagement**

How to create a more engaging applicant experience



CHALLENGE #3

#### **Admissions Bias**

How to identify and reduce bias



CHALLENGE #4

#### **Applicant Yield**

How to better assess applicants' likelihood to enroll



CHALLENGE #5

#### **Interview Effectiveness**

How to achieve consistent, effective, and reliable admissions interviews



CHALLENGE #6

#### **Diversity**

How to redesign admissions practices to admit a more diverse cohort



CHALLENGE #7

#### **Application Fraud**

How to get authentic application materials untainted by cheating



CHALLENGE #8

#### **Communication Skills**

How to validate language skills and proficiency



CHALLENGE #9

#### Soft Skills

How to test for hard to measure traits like empathy, critical thinking, and motivation



CHALLENGE #10

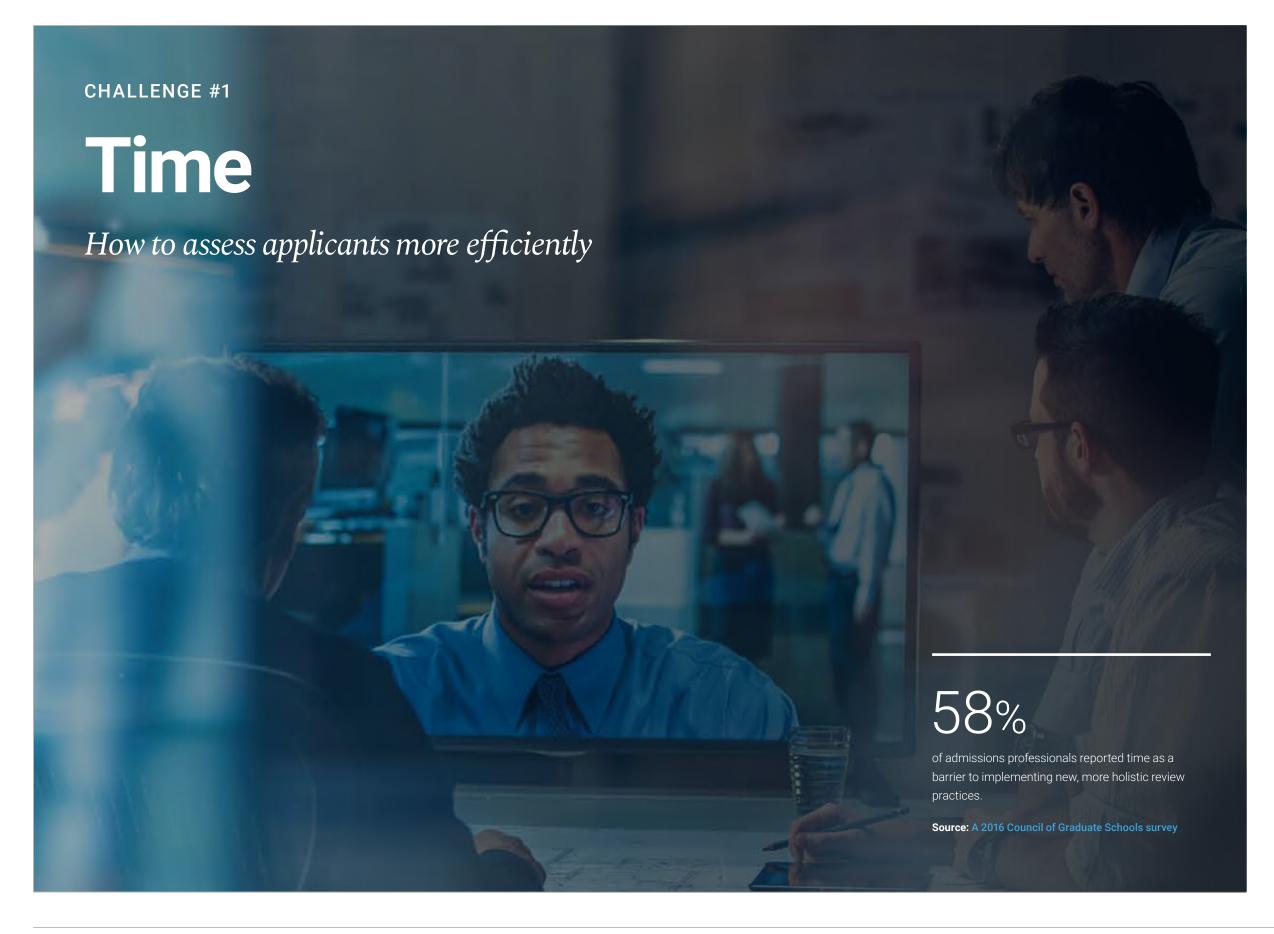
#### Authority

How to get the team on board with big change



Want to see how Kira works?

LEARN MORE >



## Admissions teams are receiving more applications than ever.

A combination of factors, including more college-seeking students, more applications due to common applications, and higher grade point and test score cut offs, are driving students to apply to anywhere from 3 to 20 different programs.

With so many individuals to examine, it's getting more and more important for schools to identify their best candidates and get offers, scholarships, or touchpoints to those applicants faster than competing programs.

For schools who want to innovate their processes, the fear of adding resources to an already time-consuming and overwhelming process is enough to stall change. A 2016 Council of Graduate Schools survey found that **58%** of admissions professionals reported time as a barrier to implementing new, more holistic review practices.

Have you ever received criticism that you initially didn't agree with?

Why? Did you change your perspective?

#### KIRA SOLUTION

### Start assessing applicants smarter

Fortunately, working with more than 300 academic programs at Kira, we've developed solutions to enhance efficiency in the process so admissions teams can focus on getting to know students and selecting the right candidates for their program.

#### Reduce the number of real-time interviews

Kira can help your school save up to 50% of your interview time each admissions cycle when used in place of a traditional interview, even if you use Skype, or up to 25% when used as a pre-screen to determine which applicants you want to invite for an interview.

#### Reduce day-to-day administrative and scheduling time

Reduce the in-between administrative time involved in booking and moving individual interviews by sending one email to all your applicants with a link to your admissions portal and a deadline.

#### Review applicants in under ten minutes

When you speak to applicants directly, you have to account for small talk and transition time. With Kira, you pre-record all of your questions one time, and only have to review their brief, timed responses.

"We can review five to six minutes of video to the next level."



**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ENROLLMENT OPERATIONS** WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY BUSINESS OF SCHOOL

and make a reliable determination if this candidate meets the criteria to move them

#### Reduce the need for multiple meetings and multiple in-person interviews. Members of your team can separately review an

applicant's Kira assessment and share their independent feedback, at their convenience, giving you multiple perspectives without duplicating efforts.

Review one interview with multiple reviewers

Review Maria's respon Competency - Adaptabilis

#### Create an all-in-one user experience

Kira can operate as a standalone supplementary application solution or it can integrate with leading CRM and ATS systems to give you a one-stop reviewing experience.

#### Reduce support time

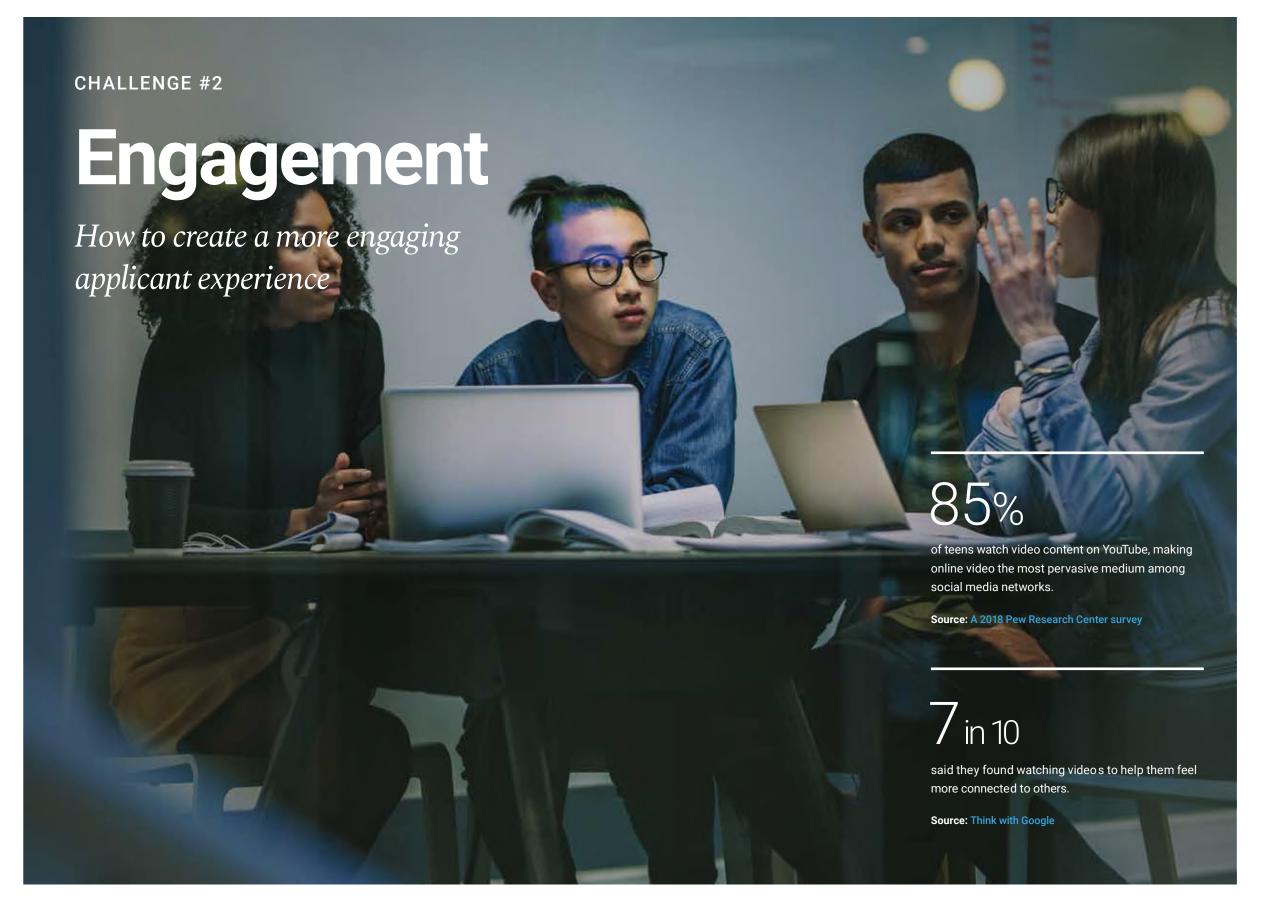
Using Kira, make IT nightmares because of video conferences a thing of the past. Unlike using Skype, YouTube, or other 'video essay' add-ons through CRMs, all applicant support inquiries are handled through 24/7 support, plus extensive email support for escalated issues.

"Since adding Kira, I feel like I got my evenings back. Because I can get more done in less time, I can actually meet more



applicants. You can't put a price on that."

ADMISSIONS MANAGER OF SPECIALTY PROGRAMS CASE WESTERN'S WEATHERHEAD SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT



# Changing your admissions process can give you way more insight into your incoming students. It can also be a competitive advantage.

Your application can create a new way to differentiate your school or fuel a further marketing touchpoint causing applicants to yield.

As an admissions team, you can't control your sports team, your geography, or likely even, your overarching brand, but one lever you do manage is the experience students have when they go through the process of considering, applying, and enrolling to your program.

Set your school apart by creating a more engaging applicant experience.

### Video connects students to schools

Video is a cornerstone of online communities for Generation Z. **85% of teens watch video content on YouTube**, making online video the most pervasive medium among social media networks.

And 7 in 10 said they found watching videos to help them feel more connected to others.

## Make your application more interactive

Adding video to your admissions process invites applicants to showcase themselves in a medium they know and, a majority of them, already love. Kira's platform gives applicants an enjoyable and interactive way to apply to your school instead of more forms to fill and essays to write.

#### Let applicants tell their story

Not only do video responses provide your team with more insight on applicants than the traditional written essay, they also give applicants a better avenue to tell their story in a way they're most comfortable.

#### Initiate a recruitment touchpoint

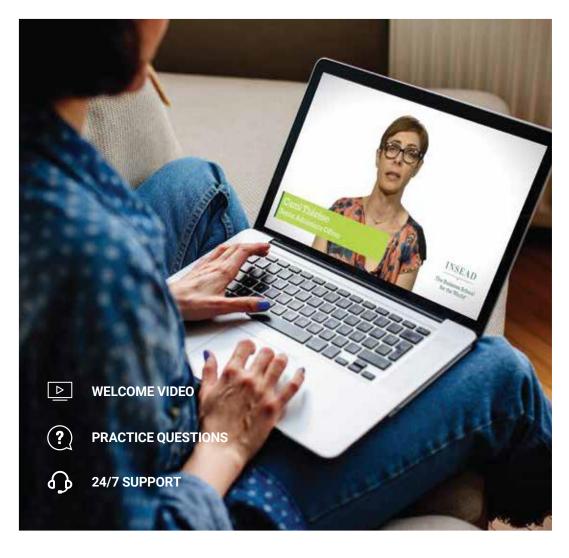
The Kira assessment also provides a new touchpoint to educate students about your programs and to showcase your school's culture. Engage your prospective students with an interactive application component complete with a branded assessment portal, welcome, and closing videos, and your customized video questions. Adding this touchpoint can be key for students who aren't able to visit campus or meet your team at an event, as it's the next best way of learning about your program and its people.

"It is so great to give students the opportunity to use the practice session in Kira to feel more at ease with the process, and to know that they can complete their interview when they want, where they want."



#### MEREDITH RICHARDSON

ADMISSIONS MANAGER OF SPECIALTY PROGRAMS, CASE WESTERN'S WEATHERHEAD SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT



#### Provide unlimited practice

Any on-the-spot assessment, such as a test or interview, can be stressful. With Kira, you can grant applicants unlimited practice attempts to answer questions and review their responses to get comfortable with the platform.

#### Reduce admissions anxiety

Kira assessments can be completed in less than 20 minutes and they encourage authenticity and real, human responses. Unlike cramming for a major standardized test or overthinking an essay question, applicants can engage in a medium where they're more at ease. Plus, they'll have access to 24/7 support if they have technical woes.

67%

of applicants preferred completing a Kira assessment over a traditional admissions essay.

Source: Kira Talent

32%

of applicants rated their Kira Talent experience "Great or Excellent."

Source: Kira Talent

Only

19%

of applicants consider recorded video responses especially challenging.

Source: AIGAC

SOLVING THE TOP 10 CHALLENGES IN ADMISSIONS CHALLENGE #3 Admissions Bias How to identify and reduce bias of schools agree on the importance of fair, defensible admissions but many of their processes tell a different story. Source: Kira Bias Report

A s debates on affirmative action and racial discrimination in admissions have made (and continue to make) headlines for the past forty years, ensuring a fair, defensive admissions process is paramount to institutions of all sizes.

It's difficult to find an admissions committee that isn't concerned on some level about making admissions more fair for applicants.

While less than half (47%) of the schools we surveyed believe bias could be a factor in their own admissions process, 70% of respondents believe that bias is a factor in admissions decisions at other schools.

**47%** - "Bias **could** be a factor in **our** admissions process."

**70%** - "Bias **is** a factor in admissions decisions at **other** schools."

Source: Kira Bias Report

#### How does bias enter the admissions process?

Humans are inherently biased. Your own life experiences, background, and education all shape your view of the world and can influence the decisions you make on a candidate.

#### But that's not all.

Factors such as who interviews an applicant, unstandardized review criteria, or reviewer exhaustion could have deep consequences on the accuracy and fairness of an applicant's evaluation.

Fortunately, by better structuring, recording, and tracking admissions reviewing, you can ensure processes are being followed to reduce biases.



For more of Kira's research on bias in the admissions process, download our full report: Breaking Down Bias in Admissions.

#### **DOWNLOAD FULL REPORT**

https://start.kiratalent.com/breaking-down-admissions-bias/

# Create a fairer review experience

Whether your review team is one or one hundred, Kira ensures consistency across all assessments to give you the information you need to make an informed and fair decision.

W e designed Kira to bring more transparency to the black box of holistic applicant reviewing. Schools will reduce the presence of bias in the review process and make smarter, more consistent admissions decisions in five key ways:

#### Establish rubrics and competencies

While onboarding with Kira, we'll build a plan with you to select and define the criteria most important to your next cohort. These rubrics and competency definitions appear in the platform to ensure all reviewers are comparing applicants on the same criteria.

#### Combine feedback from multiple reviewers

Your team can assign a single interview to multiple reviewers to get several, independent opinions for an overall average score on each applicant's Kira responses.

#### Review your reviewers

See your reviewers' average scores to identify discrepancies and identify areas for improvement to achieve greater consistency.

#### Poor

Applicant does not possess the necessary English language skills to be admitted to our program.

#### Fair

Applicant may possess the necessary English language skills, but struggles with either written or verbal communication.

#### Good

Applicant possess the necessary English language skills, and will be able to participate in class discussions and assignments.

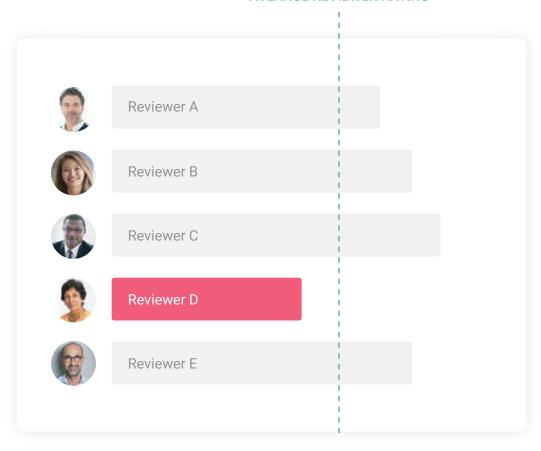
#### Great

Applicant has strong English language skills, and will be able to actively participate in class discussions and assignments.

#### **Exceptional**

Applicant's English language skills surpass expectations, and the applicant will expertly be able to participate in class discussions and assignments.

#### **AVERAGE REVIEWER RATING**



#### Reduce admissions fatigue

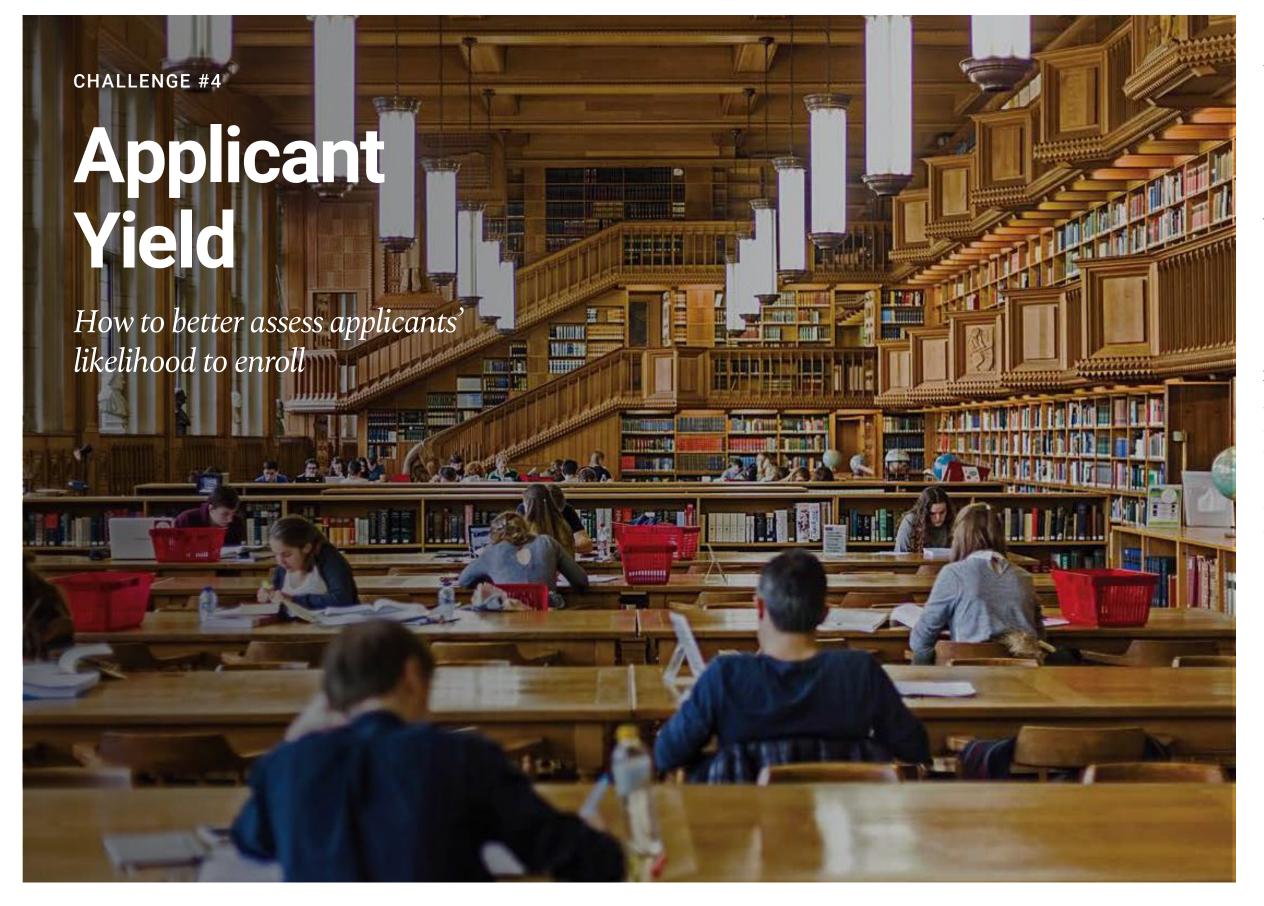
Stop cramming back-to-back applicant screening calls into your day. No more midnight calls to make up for vastly different time zones. The on-demand nature of Kira's platform allows you to review and revisit applicants when you're at your best.

Read: How Fatigue Affects Your Admissions Decisions

#### Eliminate groupthink

Don't let other members of your team bias your initial applicant feedback. Give your authentic evaluation in the platform and let Kira give you an objectively calculated average score. Read:

How to Curb Groupthink Bias in the Admissions Office.



# Your yield rate is a reflection of the desirability of your program relative to your closest competitors.

It's likely your applicants have applied to multiple programs, but your admissions process can influence their decision to join your school.

With applicants applying to as many as twenty different schools, you're competing for their decision right up until they register for classes.

Your admissions process includes several key touchpoints that can make or break if a student enrolls. We like to say it's the "dating phase" of your (hopefully) life-long relationship with your students.

# Predict yield through meaningful touchpoints

#### Assess your applicants' genuine interest

With Kira, you can see the applicants who are truly passionate about enrolling at your school by evaluating their motives and demonstrated interests in their timed responses. Likewise, you can get an indication of the applicants who aren't actually interested in your program if they do not take the time to complete their assessment.

Finding the students passionate about joining your program, rather than the students who copy and paste their admissions essay for another school they'd rather attend, will help yield a higher rate of applicants.

### Build a relationship with applicants and keep them engaged

The Kira platform allows you to share a welcome video where you can showcase your campus and introduce your team or faculty. By adding a video assessment between the application due date and admissions decision date, you gain an additional touchpoint to keep your school top-of-mind over your competitors.

By asking meaningful questions to applicants, you prove that you're interested in getting to know them better. And, the overall admissions experience is more memorable for the applicant, creating a more memorable connection to the school.

#### Review students sooner to get decisions out faster

Because Kira assessments can be completed at any time, you can review students as their submissions come in rather than waiting until their phone screen time or in-person interview.

"Using Kira, I can start reviewing applications earlier. It saves me time; I'm easily saving a week or two."

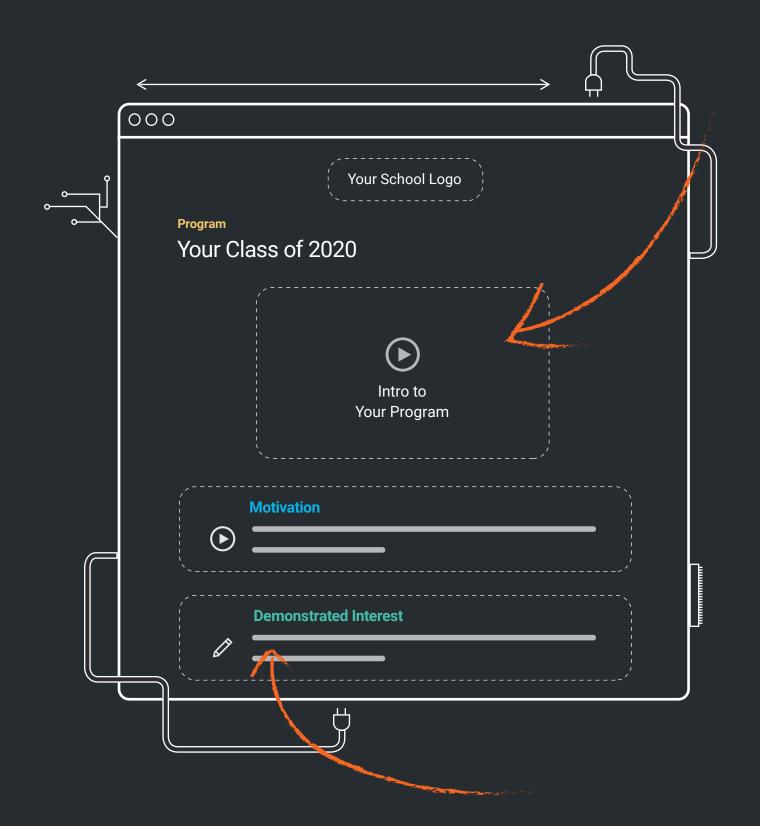


#### **BRUCE CAMPBEL**

DIRECTOR OF ADMISSIONS,
JOHNS HOPKINS CAREY SCHOOL OF
BUSINESS

#### **HELPFUL RESOURCES**

How Technology Can Level the Playing Field of "Demonstrated Interest"





#### **Structured Interview**

In a structured interview, each applicant walks away having had a consistent experience.

A structured interview requires consistencyat its core and is likely to include:

- The same number of questions
- The same questions or the same type of questions (using a question template would help diversify questions that would evaluate the same trait)
- The same evaluation method, such as a rubric or rating scale

#### **Unstructured Interview**

### An unstructured interview is a more casual conversation where:

- Questions flow out of the discussion in an unrehearsed way
- Interviewers have an opportunity to completely customize the interview to an applicant's experiences, background, or career history
- Interviewees may have the opportunity to ask questions in response

## Many interviewers prefer unstructured interviews because they feel comfortable and authentic.

They tend to praise the conversation-like interaction for giving them a better chance to get to know an applicant based on their 'gut reaction' or intuition. In fact, anywhere from 85% to 97% of professionals rely to some degree on intuition when making a decision on a candidate.

Unfortunately, the research shows that these unstructured interviews are half as effective as structured interviews.

**Why?** Unstructured interviews are far more susceptible to factors like cognitive biases, reviewer fatigue, and burnout, because so much of the interview experience can be dependent on the mood of the interviewer or panel.

This interview type also inherently creates an unfair and unbalanced interview experience for applicants. While it may seem advantageous to have the freedom to dig into a specific topic area with an applicant, by not giving other applicants the chance to speak to the same area, you may be inherently advantaging or disadvantaging some groups.

Only

45%

of admissions teams said they interview applicants with a standard set of questions – one key aspect of a structured interview.

Source: Breaking Down Bias in Admissions

VS.

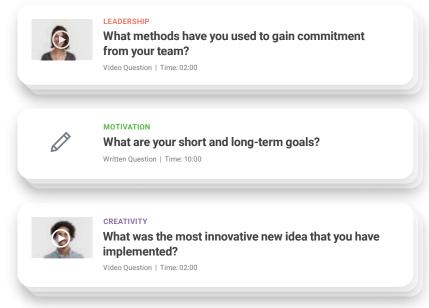
# Implement structured interviews

By nature, Kira assessments are designed to simulate a structured interview.

#### Structured questions

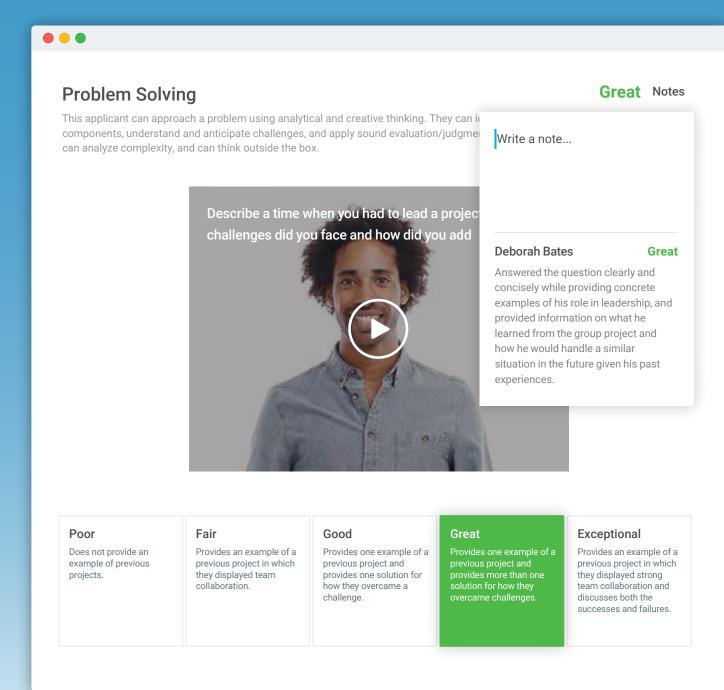
Every applicant is given a similar assessment that shares the same number of questions and the same evaluation rubrics.

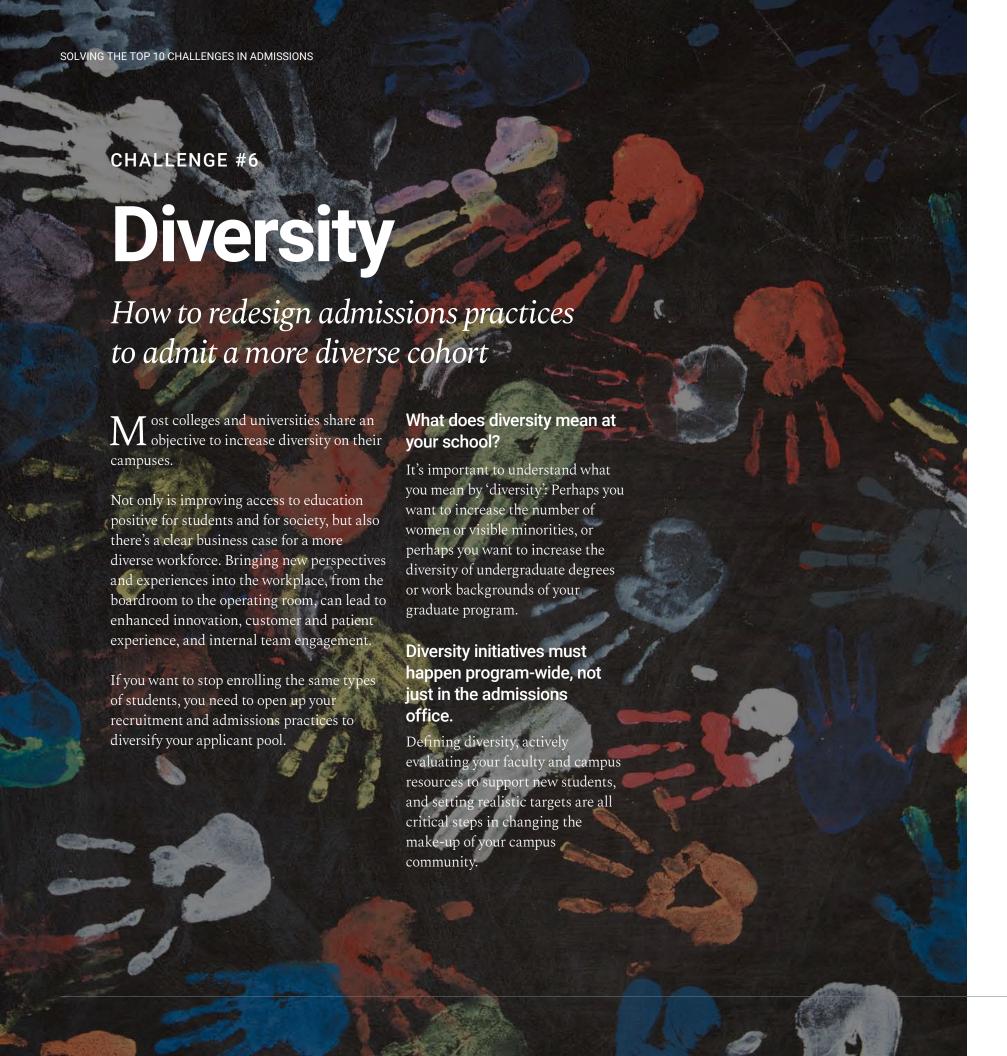
While the questions will be unique enough that they cannot be cheated or over rehearsed, Kira's team works with you to develop question templates and build assessments that are similar enough for applicants to have a consistent experience.



#### Structured reviewing

Because applicant responses are recorded, all admissions reviewers see the same responses. They also perform their evaluations on the same rubrics, and have their feedback collated to get an overall Results page for each student.





## How do holistic admissions practices increase diversity?

Traditional metrics for evaluating students such as grades and test scores often lean in favor of affluent, white, male students.

Not only do studies show a correlation between race, gender, and test scores, test preparation itself is expensive and time-consuming, making it more difficult for

Likewise, traditional admissions bonuses like legacy preference or demonstrated interest also have the potential to replicate the same student body a school has had for decades.

students who don't have the luxury of extra

By changing your "cut off" criteria from the traditional metrics to screen in more students, based on more factors, you can begin to level the playing field in admissions. You will screen students into your class based on a variety of factors and are more likely to draw a more diverse group of applicants into your review pool.

4/5

money and time.

schools using many holistic review elements saw an increase in diversity

**Source:** A National Survey by the URBAN Universities for Health. 2014

### Conduct a holistic admissions process

A holistic review with multiple elements that include timed video and timed written assessments gives applicants multiple areas to showcase their strengths.

#### Use timed video and timed written assessments

Inviting applicants to take a timed assessment from anywhere and at any time gives them an opportunity to tell their story in their words, rather than through the lens of a test or a transcript.

#### Create a competency-based evaluation of your supplementary materials

Evaluate applicants holistically by combining existing application materials like grades, test scores, and essays with timed assessments and evaluating them all in one place.

#### **Build your cohort**

Stop missing out on great applicants by identifying your top candidates in each relevant competency. By reviewing in Kira, you can sort and stack applicants based on how they did on specific aspects of their admissions file.



**ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING** 

#### **Leadership Potential**

- This applicant has a vision of how they'd like to create positive impact, and how things can be improved
- They are confident and directed with strong vision for their path in life
- They lead by example and advocate for others



AVG. RATING

49



#### LEADERSHIP POTENTIAL

COMMUNICATION

**CRITICAL THINKING** 

**EMPATHY** 

**GPA** 

"The technology has enabled us to get a more holistic view of a candidate's story, contributing to more depth and insight about our candidates so that we can select the very best talent for Rotman."



FORMER MANAGING DIRECTOR OF FULL-TIME MBA PROGRAM, ROTMAN SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT



# Admissions fraud is a problem facing virtually every admissions team.

As we saw from the 2019 college admissions scandal, there are services out there that will cross any line to get applicants accepted.

#### Why fight fraud?

Of course, having a group of applicants who cheat their way in is straight-up unfair. However, fraud can have a deeper impact on your school as well. Admitting applicants who haven't earned their spots deteriorates the caliber of your classroom, the success of your students, and the quality of your alumni network.

62%

of admissions professionals agreed that admissions consultants may help applicants fabricate information on their applications.

Source: Kira Fraud Report

Protect your process from fraud with Kira

Using Kira's on-demand assessments you'll get an authentic view of applicants in the form of a 'spontaneous' assessment, where applicants are required to think on their feet.

### Get a candid view of applicants' oral and written communication skills

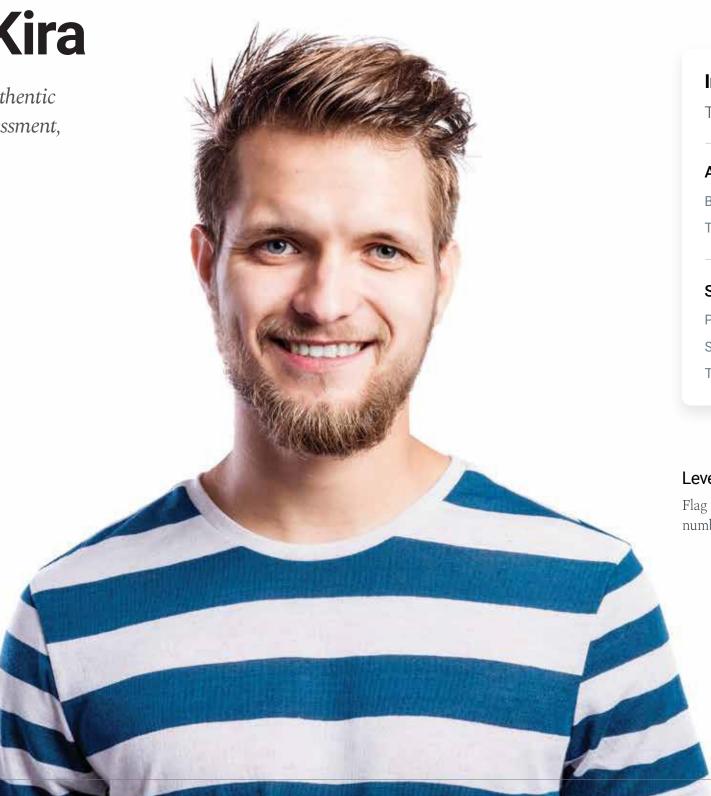
Through timed video and written responses, applicants who have plagiarized or cheated to complete their application now have to represent their true selves in Kira with a video record.

#### Compare application materials with a new data point

Timed written responses can be compared with the written materials your applicants submitted earlier in the application process. If you notice a large discrepancy in terms of their writing ability, you may have found an applicant who used a consultant for their admissions essay.

#### Reduce question-sharing online

With a pool of pre-recorded questions on the same template, applicants receive a random selection of questions. Even if one student posts the questions she was asked online, the next student will receive a different question.



#### Integrity

DETAILS >

This applicant showed suspicious activities.

#### **Assessment behaviors**

Browser refreshes 21

Typing speed 3,947 words per minute

#### Similarity score

Personal Statement 2%

Short Essay 58%

Timed Written Assessment for Leadership

#### Leverage Kira's integrity tools

Flag applicants who exhibit unusual behavior, such as high numbers of browser refreshes or excessively fast typing speeds. **CHALLENGE #8** 

### Communication Skills

How to validate language skills and proficiency

Competencies that employers seek in graduates. They're also notoriously difficult to assess. From the boardroom to the bedside, listening, understanding, and articulating oneself is critical to nearly every workplace.

While some tests can assess writing ability and others comprehension, there is yet to be a definitive 'score' that shows someone's communication prowess. Furthermore, like any other standardized test, there's a risk of cheating, fraudulent scores, or memorized responses.



### See and hear from your applicants

There is no better way to efficiently and effectively assess applicants' communication skills than with Kira.

#### Evaluate real-time oral communication skills

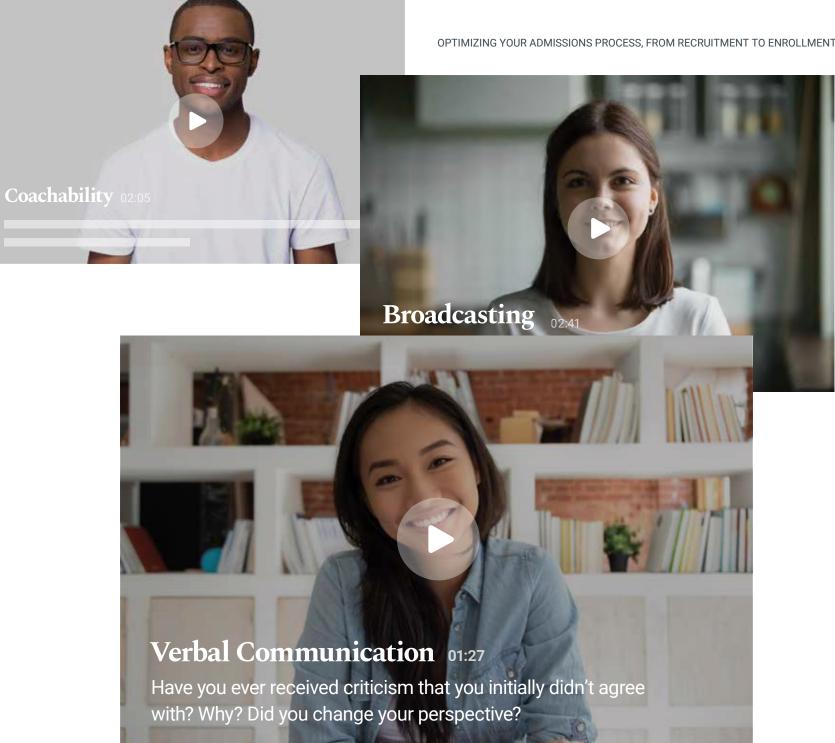
With Kira's interactive timed video assessments, schools can see how applicants think on their feet. Kira gives admissions teams an efficient and authentic glance of how the candidate can perform in a real-life setting, without having to book a time-consuming in-person or phone interview.

#### Get a genuine written communication sample

Using timed written assessments, applicants display their written communication skills under a time constraint without outside help from proofreaders or coaches.

#### Get the insight of an interview in a fraction of the time

Reviewing responses in Kira can take five-to-ten minutes, in total. Skip the added time of scheduling and conducting 30-minute phone calls without losing the immense value of hearing directly from applicants.



"Someone might look really great on paper but their Kira assessment helps us see their professionalism or communication skills are not what we're looking for. And at the same time, we can see someone who might be a diamond in the rough."



FORMER DIRECTOR OF FULL-TIME MBA ADMISSIONS, FOSTER SCHOOL OF BUSINESS



#### **CHALLENGE #9**

### Soft Skills

#### How to test for hard to measure traits like empathy, critical thinking, and motivation

Evaluating applicants on their whole selves, the context and experience they bring, and their soft skills, has potential to improve a number of student success outcomes, including diversity on campus, in-class engagement, retention, and job placement.

The most difficult component of a holistic review to 'assess' is typically noncognitive traits.

While grades and test scores may indicate academic potential, there's so much more to being successful as a student and in the career path they've chosen.

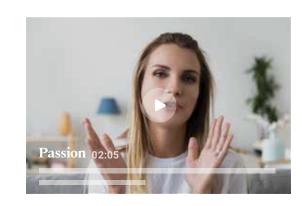
# Add a competency-based admissions assessment

At Kira, we work with schools to clearly define the specific competencies they're looking for in their ideal students and build evaluation criteria based on those for reviewers to assess applicants on. Each question is designed to demonstrate evidence of the competency you're hoping to evaluate.

We'll take you through five steps to build a powerful assessment for those hard-to-measure variables:

- **Determining the core competencies** of your program's most successful graduates
- **2** Creating custom competency descriptions to guide your team of reviewers
- **Establishing a cohort vision** to drive clarity on what success looks like
- **4 Crafting custom assessment questions** that reflect the core competencies
- **Refining a detailed evaluation rubric** designed for consistent reviewing

The end result? An effective way to accurately identify applicants with the traits needed to succeed in your program.



"We have been better able to evaluate profiles that are more atypical. Some candidates literally come to life on the screen... we can look them in the eye, and realize their drive and passions."

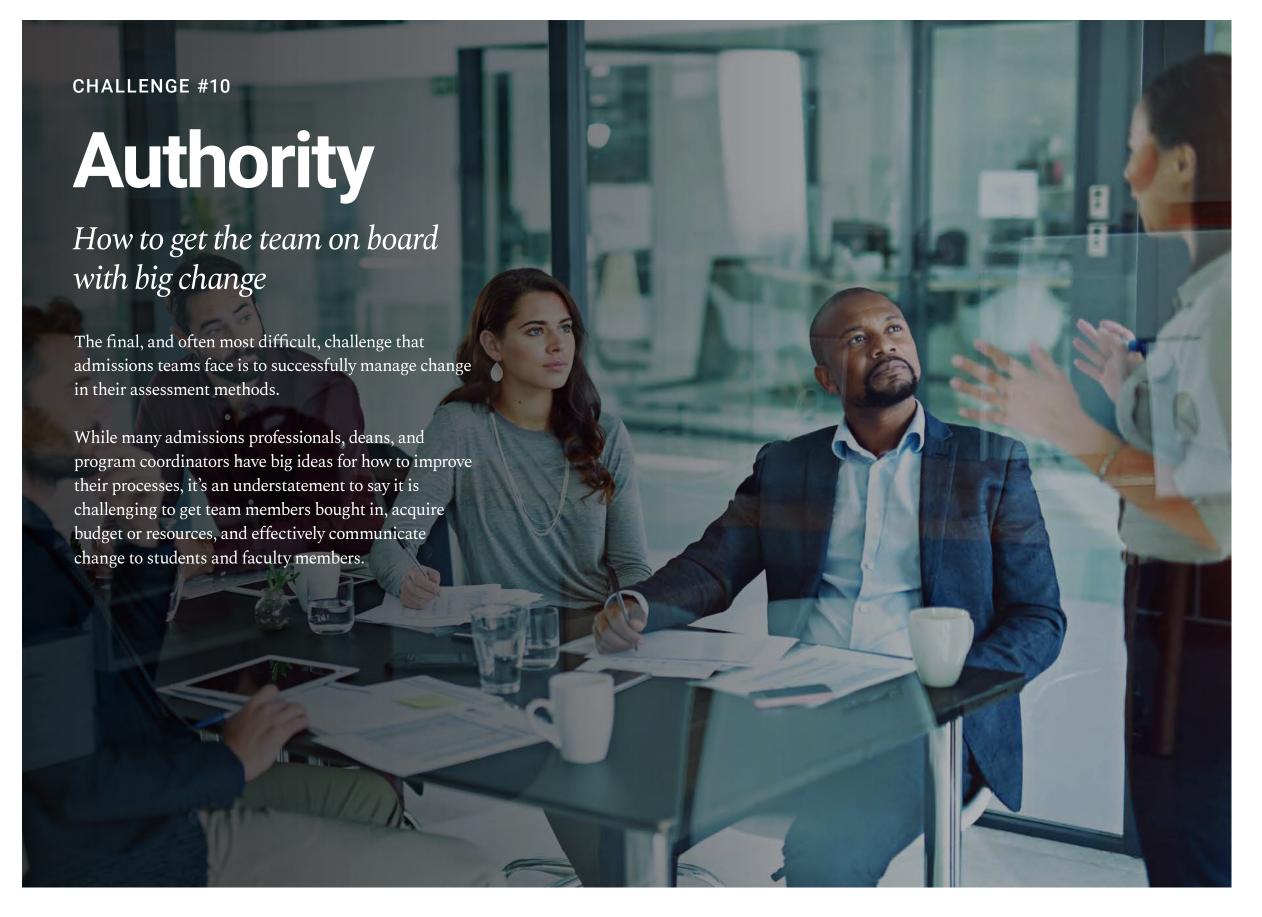


VIRGINIE FOUGEA

DIRECTOR OF MBA RECRUITMENT AND

ADMISSIONS, INSEAD





#### Four Questions to Ask When Initiating Change in Admissions Assessment

- WHY: Establish and define the problem you're trying to solve and how you will measure success?
- WHO: Identity the key stakeholders who need to be engaged in changing, adding, or removing an element of your application process.
- **WHEN:** Develop a timeline for when the update needs to occur so that it can be up and running for the desired admissions cycle.
- HOW: Identify the possible solutions, whether they include new technologies, new responsibilities for your team or committee, or new processes, and the budget and human resources that you will require to implement them.

# Leverage Kira's Admissions Experts to Navigate Change

The good news is: You're not alone.

Talk to us today to speak with your school's dedicated Partnerships Manager who can walk you through a customized demonstration of Kira Talent and how it can work for your school.

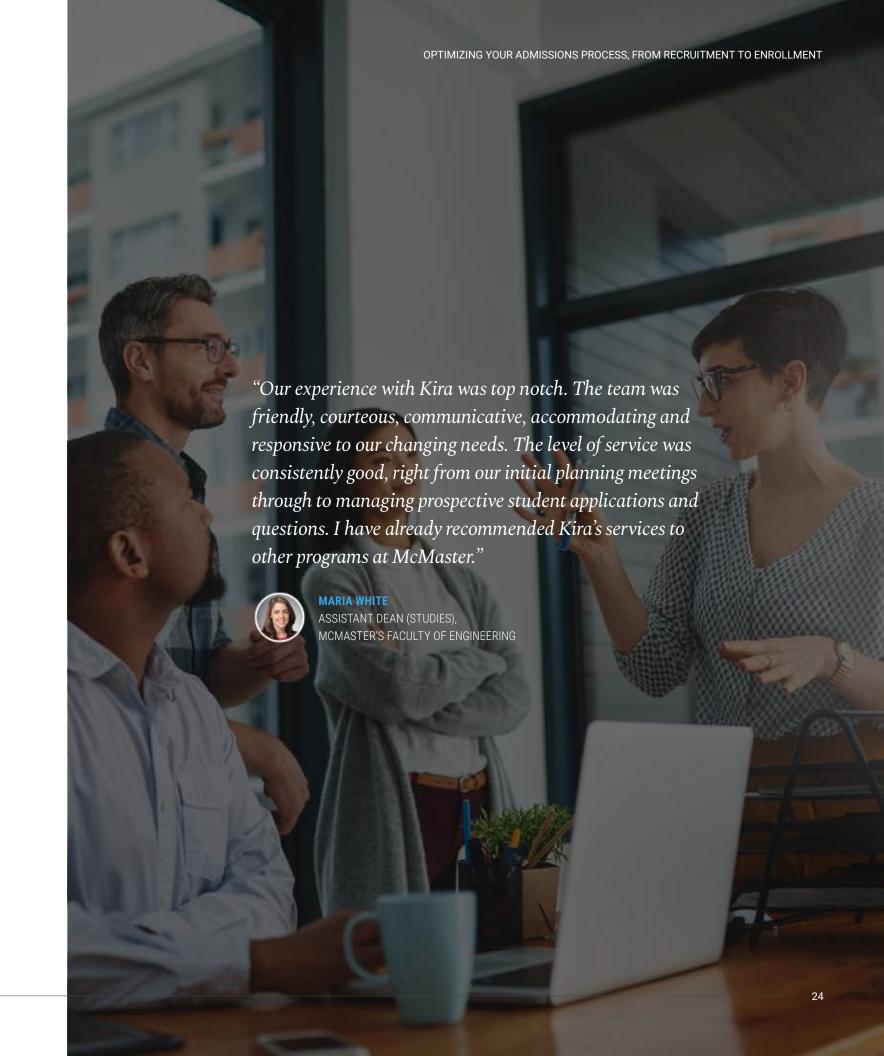
#### We'll tackle:

- Your admissions objectives and if Kira is a solution that can help tackle your challenges
- ? Any questions, concerns, and hesitations
- Timing and budget required to get Kira up and running for your next admissions cycle

Working with us, you'll have access to our incredible Client Success Team who will work with you to build your school's assessments, handle technical support, and measure the success of your new admissions initiative.

**Book a Free Consultation** 



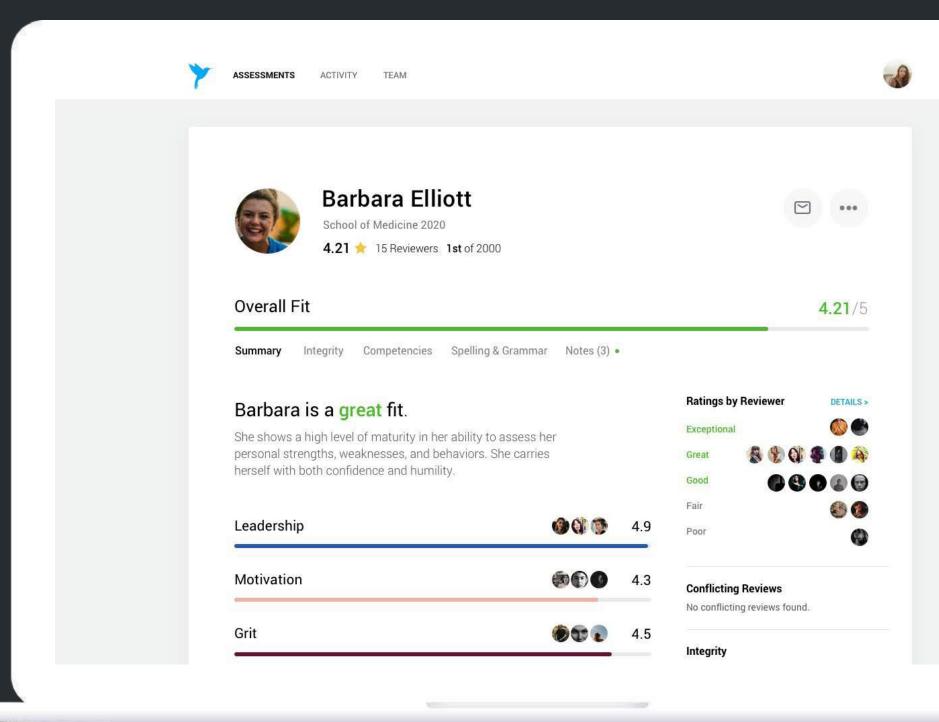




KIRA PLATFORM

The world's only holistic admissions solution for higher education.

Book a free demo





See the Reviews





















**Kira Talent** We make admissions fair